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DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EUR/SE, EUR/PD, NEA/PD, DRL
JCS PASS J-5/CDR S. WRIGHT

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: OPRC KMDR TU
SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2008

In Today's Papers

Ankara Prosecutor Takes the First Step toward Examining Deniz Feneri Case

Mainstream Milliyet reports that the Ankara prosecutor decided to respond to a legal complaint filed by the Labor Party against the AKP for irregularities in the Deniz Feneri case. In the complaint, the Labor Party demands legal action against PM Erdogan, RTUK President Akman, the managers of the Turkish Deniz Feneri charity, the administration of Kanal 7 TV and all private Turkish companies linked to the German-based Deniz Feneri organization. Five different prosecutors will be asked to probe the different aspects of the case. If the prosecutors decide to start an official investigation, they may contact German authorities to request information about the charges directed to the Deniz Feneri charity organization in Germany. Milliyet adds that the prosecutors have no authority to take legal action against PM Erdogan and the PM's permission is necessary to initiate an investigation against RTUK president Akman and the other state officials.

Editorial Commentary on Deniz Feneri case

Hasan Cemal wrote in mainstream Milliyet: "PM Erdogan's attitude towards the "Deniz Feneri" case is very wrong. Instead of losing his temper, Erdogan should refute the allegations with evidence and initiate an investigation in Turkey. I hope that Erdogan will stop fighting with the media soon and will focus on the real agenda in Turkey. Turkey's development process does not need conflicts and tensions, but a peaceful and gentle atmosphere. Let everyone fulfill their own responsibilities without damaging the stability in the country."

Tufan Turenc wrote in mainstream Hurriyet: "It is difficult to understand PM Erdogan's recent attitude regarding the Deniz Feneri case. I really wonder why he is acting like a defense lawyer for the suspects of this case and attacking the media. Does he feel that he cannot be criticized just because the AKP won 47 percent of the votes in the last elections? Maybe the reason for his uncontrollable actions is because of the illegal money transfers to his party and the realization that if these allegations are proven

to be true, his party will be closed and he will be tried at the Supreme Court. PM Erdogan already deserves to be tried at the Supreme Court for all the illegal acts he has performed during his administration."

Huseyin Gulerce in Islamist-oriented Zaman: "Why is the fight between the PM and Dogan Media Group (DMG) growing? Is it because Aydin Dogan is trying to distract the public from the 'Ergenekon' investigation because he may have played a role? Or is it because the PM is making a preemptive strike in response to rumors DMG will launch a new assault campaign against the AKP when the Constitutional Court announces its justification over the closure case? Do you think there can be a winner in this fight? What would democracy, press freedoms, and politics win? Will this make the Ergenekon investigation disappear? The PM, no matter how right he might be, must think about these questions. There is no way out in Turkey other than raising the institutions to European Union standards."

Mehmet Tezkan wrote in mainstream Vatan: "PM Erdogan's recent efforts to defend the people involved in Deniz Feneri case angered not only the liberals but conservative Muslims as well. Conservative Muslims made these donations in the name of God and the PM's support for the corrupt has hurt these people deeply. Liberal democrats were also hurt and angry with the PM because they support EU membership and they know that, as the main rule of democracy, the press is free in Europe."

Cuneyt Arcayurek in leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet: "Mr Zahit Akman, who delivers lessons of morals, manners and decency to national

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broadcasters, is mentioned 34 times in the German indictment regarding the Deniz Feneri case. Akman, who could be arrested as soon as he tries to enter Germany, has not considered resigning from his post at RTUK. Indiscretions and bribery will naturally grow in a country where those who are in control have facilitated religious exploitation."

Turkey and Armenia to Release Joint Statement
Mainstream Sabah reports that Turkey and Armenia are working on a joint declaration to be released in New York or Istanbul. Reportedly, the declaration will stress a new positive approach to bilateral ties. Papers add that Foreign Minister Babacan will go to New York on September 18 and will stay there until the end of the month. During his stay in New York, Babacan will hold talks with Armenian FM Nalbandian and if the two Ministers reach an agreement on the declaration, the document will be released in New York by the end of this month. Otherwise, the declaration will be released in October in Istanbul.

Meanwhile, FM Babacan talked with Secretary Rice over the phone regarding the new dialogue between Turkey and Armenia. Babacan stressed the importance of resolving problems between Azerbaijan and Armenia, and Turkey's support for the Minsk Process and added that settlement of the Nagorno-Karabagh dispute would have a positive impact on Turkey-Armenia ties. Secretary Rice, in turn, praised and supported Turkish efforts to tackle disputes in the region.

Cypriot Leaders Begin 'Substantive' Peace Talks
Media outlets report that on Thursday, Turkish and Greek Cypriot leaders Mehmet Ali Talat and Demetris Christofias came together in the buffer zone in Nicosia (Lefkosa) for "substantive negotiations" regarding a settlement to end the division of the island. No statement was released following the meeting. UN Special Cyprus Envoy Alexander Downer, who joined the meeting, said the negotiations focused on "governance" and "power sharing." Downer added the same topics would be on the agenda when the leaders meet again on September 18. Islamist-oriented Zaman points to the differing approaches of the two sides, saying Turkish Cypriots want a "presidential council" like in Bosnia-Herzegovina or Switzerland while the Greek Cypriots ask for a "rotating presidential system."

Anti-Terror Board Convenes
Media outlets report the Counter-Terrorism Board convened Thursday

to discuss cross-border operations against terrorists and other plans for combating terror. Prime Minister Erdogan chaired the meeting, which was attended by the Chief of the General Staff (TGS) Ilker Basbug and the Land Forces and Gendarme commanders as well as some cabinet ministers. The participants concluded that economic, social and psychological measures for combating terror should be enhanced. The meeting also discussed the security operations at home and in northern Iraq. Erdogan said his government was ready to renew the decree authorizing the military to carry out cross-border operations against terrorists.

Meanwhile, tabloid Aksam says the ruling AKP was hesitant regarding the extension of the parliamentary decree authorizing cross-border operations against the PKK in northern Iraq. The decree ends on October 17. The paper comments the AKP leaders fear that the extension of the decree could undermine support for the ruling party in the mainly Kurdish southeast on the eve of the forthcoming municipality elections in March.

Opposition CHP deputy chairman Onur Oymen said the decree was vital in combating terrorism, and warned that the government would have a hard time in the fight against the PKK if it can't renew the authorization of the parliament. Opposition far right MHP deputy group chief Oktay Vural said his party would support the extension of the decree.

Editorial Commentary on Terrorism

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Hikmet Bila writes in leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet: "After 9-11, the Bush administration has turned Turkey, an ally of the US for 60 years, into chaos. The U.S. established a Kurdish state in northern Iraq, and gave a green light to Turkey's Kurds toward the same end. Under the protection of the state it has helped established in northern Iraq, the U.S. has aided the PKK terror organization. On the other hand, the U.S. forced Turkey into wearing a 'moderate Islam' shirt. This is the meaning of 'The Crusades' Bush has declared seven years ago. This is the reason for the intense distress Turkey is going through today."

U.S. Denies Israel Access to Iraqi Airspace
Islamist-oriented Zaman reports in "Israel Wants an Air Corridor from the U.S. In Order to Strike Iran," that the U.S. is "concerned Israel will carry out a nuclear strike against Iran," after "months of controversy regarding the Israeli request." Zaman notes Israel "was unable to get the green light from the U.S. for an attack against Iran."

TV News:
CNN Turk

Domestic News

- The Turkish military has intensified operations against the PKK along the border with Iraq as well as in the provinces of Tunceli, Bingol, Diyarbakir and Siirt before winter sets in the region.
- The Justice Ministry is expected to make a statement Friday concerning the results of an investigation of legal complaints filed against the Ergenekon prosecutor Zekeriya Oz.
- The Council of State (Danistay) has suspended aid extended by the AKP-run Ankara Municipality to private Koran courses and non-commercial, Islamist-leaning student dormitories.

International News

- South Ossetian leader Eduard Kokoity said press reports quoting him as saying the Georgian breakaway region intended to become part of Russia were a 'misinterpretation' of his statement.
- Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said the U.S. missile defense shield to be deployed in Poland poses a direct threat to Russia's security.
- President Hamid Karzai says Afghanistan has seen progress since

the ouster of the Taliban regime, but it has also suffered much "pain" in civilian casualties.

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